

County: North Yorkshire/Humbeside

Site Name: Thixen Dale and Long Dale

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

Local Planning Authority: Ryedale District Council, East Yorkshire Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SE 831600, 843606, 845593

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 100 & 106 **1:10,000:** SE 85 NW, 86 SW

Area: 83.4 (ha) 206.0 (ac) (Ryedale)
6.3 (ha) 15.5 (ac) (East Yorkshire)
89.7 (ha) 221.5 (ac) (Total)

First Notified: (Part of Thixendale) 1954 *

Date of Revision: 1985

Description:

The complex of valleys south of Thixendale village provides characteristic examples of a range of chalk grassland types found on the Yorkshire Wolds.

On the south-facing slope of Long Dale, the grassland is a mosaic of close-grazed sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and lightly grazed tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*-dominated turf with scattered hawthorns *Crataegus monogyna*. It is rich in herbs including rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium*, dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*, kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* and clustered bellflower *Campanula glomerata*. Red fescue *F. rubra* dominates the north-facing slope, with tussocks of tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* frequent towards the eastern end. This bank supports several chalk species at the western end, including salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor* and purging flax *Linum catharticum*, but further east it soon becomes more acid with an unusual mixture of calcicole and calcifuge species: heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*, heather *Calluna vulgaris* and tormentil *Potentilla erecta* amongst dropwort and crested hair-grass *Koeleria macrantha*.

At the northern end of the site, the east-facing bank of Thixen Dale contains a higher proportion of such coarse grasses as upright brome *Bromus erectus* and cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, although red and sheep's fescue are also abundant. Although not as herb-rich as Long Dale, this field contains frequent clustered bellflower, field scabious *Knautia arvensis* and lesser knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, with salad burnet, purging flax, greater knapweed *C. scabiosa* and burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*.

On the opposite side of Thixen Dale the grassland at the north end is mainly rather species-poor, but further south it becomes richer, with abundant rockrose, greater knapweed, saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*, salad burnet and field scabious as components of a community dominated by tor grass, false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, quaking grass *Briza media* and red fescue. The southern half of Thixen Dale is heavily grazed, with large areas of almost pure tor grass alternating with richer 'islands' of fescue-dominated turf.

Bradeham Dale and Worm Dale are similar in character to Long Dale, with their strongly calcareous south/south-east facing slopes supporting a tor grass-fescue mosaic and the slightly more acidic north/north-west facing slopes containing species such as tormentil and pignut *Conopodium majus*.

Other Information:

During the 1985 revision, this site has been considerably extended, and a small area deleted.

*Under Section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.